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This is a suggestive work. The author's thesis is vigorously maintained. But at the risk of being classed as a "Conformist," the reviewer is constrained to feel that we have here, as so often in English Dissenting literature, a point of view which, developed under the dominance of an ever-present Establishment, emphasizes the ideal and the theoretical at the expense of the practical. Christian organization has always been the product of life—that is, of life in some period and some part of the Christian community. The question of the extent to which the institutions produced by the life of a by-gone age should serve to express the life of the present, or of one land those of another, is undoubtedly most difficult. But at least equally difficult is it to see just how, as a practical matter, the life of any given period can "make organization" that will not of necessity include much of inherited form and method which may not be the immediate outgrowth of the life of the particular age. Doubtless a compromise will always be made between the principles which the author styles "Conformity" and "Nonconformity"; and such compromise has been the actual history of English Nonconformity.

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THE RISE AND FALL OF THE HIGH COMMISSION. ROLAND G. USHER. Clarendon Press. 1913. Pp. 380. 15s.

The recent dictum of one of our most distinguished scholars, that for "very very much history there is more importance in the ancient error than in the new-found truth," is significantly illustrated in the apparent ineradicability of the old idea that the Star Chamber and Court of High Commission were originally and always instruments of tyranny and oppression. The bitter hostility of their many opponents during the last decade of their existence, when they were the tools of a monarch as unpopular and inefficient as his Tudor predecessors had been the reverse, has blinded posterity to the indubitable fact, that during the vastly preponderant portion of their lifetime, they were both regarded as useful and beneficent institutions. But the efforts of modern historians to secure any general recognition of this truth, outside the pale of the specialists, have met with singularly little success. Hitherto the Star Chamber has been the beneficiary of the larger number of attempted rehabilitations; but now the sister institution has evoked a doughty champion in the person of Professor Usher; to whose diligent labors in

the Tudor and Stuart vineyards the enormous number of references to his own previous writings in the foot-notes of the present volume bears eloquent testimony. He has certainly produced an excellent piece of work. Abundantly furnished, as always, with original material, he has organized and digested it far more thoroughly than in any of his previous books; best of all, he has learned to write simply, clearly, and unpretentiously. The result is a volume which reflects great credit on the author, and which will prove an indispensable guide to all who are interested in the constitutional and ecclesiastical history of the period with which it deals.

Three features of the present work deserve special notice. In the first place, Professor Usher has done good service in emphasizing the continuity of the development of the institution which he describes, from the commission issued to Thomas Cromwell in 1535, to its emergence as a permanent ecclesiastical court about 1580. The view taken by Coke and the later assailants of the Commission, that it owed its legal existence to the Act of Supremacy of 1559, ignored the earlier phases of its growth; and, from the point of view of the historian, is entirely misleading. Secondly, the author has done much to elucidate the jurisdiction, actual working, and procedure of the body, as constituted between 1580 and 1641. It could reach crimes with which the ordinary ecclesiastical court was powerless to deal, and could render a final decision. Its procedure was swift and effective (the court often transacted business in a hundred suits on a single day), and much was left to the discretion of the Commissioners. Those who continue to regard the Commission as an instrument of tyranny and oppression will probably be amazed to learn that during the last thirty years of its existence only about five per cent of the cases that came before it were instituted by the Commissioners themselves, while at least eighty per cent were suits between party and party; in other words, it was resorted to voluntarily, and the notion that it was the chief work of the Commission to ferret out cases must be discarded.

Lastly, Professor Usher deals at length with the growth of the opposition to the Commission. In that growth he distinguishes three phases. During the first (1584-1592) and during the last (1611-1642) the assaults emanated for the most part from isolated Puritans, who had felt, directly or indirectly, the weight of the Commission's authority. The majority of these assaults, at least during the latest phase, were delivered from the floor of the House of Commons, where the Puritan opposition was assured of a sympathetic audience. In the intervening stage, from 1592 to 1611, the attack was far more

systematic, and was directed by the judges of the common law under the leadership of the irascible Coke, whose sturdy championship of the legal system which he represented caused him to regard with bitter hostility any institution which did not recognize its supremacy. Royal intervention, the penal promotion, and finally the removal of the Lord Chief Justice ended this phase of the assault; and the common-law judges were forced jealously to acquiesce in a jurisdiction which they found it impossible to overthrow. Professor Usher's treatment of this phase of his subject, especially his discussion of the relative merits of the legal arguments, is admirable. His efforts to reconcile the virulence of the opposition to the Commission in the last ten years of its existence with the "overwhelming evidence" in favor of its popularity, are perhaps somewhat less convincing; but the problem is scarcely susceptible of entirely satisfactory explanation. Certainly it was the whole system which the Commission represented, rather than the Commission itself, which was at fault. Personal considerations probably had much to do with it. That the first systematic attack on the Commission followed so closely on the substitution of the stern Whitgift for the gentle Grindal, is highly significant. The story of the man who, fifty years later, threw a long stick with a prohibition nailed to the end of it, into the room where the Commission was sitting, to show that he would not touch the Archbishop with a ten-foot pole, indicates that much may be explained by the unpopularity of Laud.

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